

The Art of Acting

A Discussion by
CONSTANT COQUELIN
HENRY IRVING
AND
DION BOUCICAULT

This Volume

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The Art of Acting

PUBLICATIONS

of the

Dramatic Museum

OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Series

Papers on Acting

- I 'THE ART OF ACTING,' by Dion Boucicault, with an introduction by Otis Skinner.
- II 'ACTORS AND ACTING,' a discussion by Constant Coquelin, Henry Irving, and Dion Boucicault.
- III 'ON THE STAGE,' by Frances Anne Kemble, with an introduction by George Arliss.
- IV 'A COMPANY OF ACTORS,' by Francisque Sarcey, with an introduction by Brander Matthews.

PAPERS ON ACTING

II

The Art of Acting

A DISCUSSION BY

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AND
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C O N T E N T S

Explanatory Note by B. M.	I
I. Actors and Acting by Constant Coquelin.....	5
II. M. Coquelin on Actors and Acting by Henry Irving	43
III. Coquelin—Irving by Dion Boucicault	54
IV. A Reply to Mr. Henry Irving by Constant Coquelin	63
V. A Reply to Mr. Dion Boucicault by Constant Coquelin	83



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EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 1880, Constant Coquelin published a lecture on 'Art and the Actor,' which was translated into English by Miss Abby Langdon Alger and issued in America in 1881. It was reissued in 1915 (with an introduction by Henry James) as one of the 'Papers on Acting' which constituted the second series of the Publications of the Dramatic Museum of Columbia University.

To *Harper's Monthly* for May, 1887, Coquelin contributed a paper entitled 'Actors and Acting.' This promptly evoked from Henry Irving a retort, 'M. Coquelin on Actors and Acting,' which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for June, 1887, only one month later. Then, two months after Irving's article, Dion Boucicault printed in the *North American Review* for August, 1887, an article which he called 'Coquelin — Irving.'

Finally, in *Harper's Weekly* for November 12, 1887, Coquelin replied first to Henry Irving and then to Dion Boucicault.

These five papers, taken together and in their proper sequence, contain a body of doctrine about the art of acting which has permanent value, — in addition to the piquancy of the spectacle afforded by the triangular duel of three eminent practitioners of the histrionic art. And there is advantage, therefore, in bringing together these essays partly that we may enjoy the skill of fence displayed by the three distinguished actors but mainly that we may profit by what they have severally to tell us about their art. When accomplished craftsmen come forward to discuss the secrets of their calling, the rest of us will do well to listen attentively and to profit by what they have to tell us.

B. M.

ACTING AND ACTORS

I

ACTING AND ACTORS

I

Art I define as a whole, wherein a large element of beauty clothes and makes acceptable a still larger element of truth.

Thus in the execution of a work of art the painter has his colors; his canvas, and his brushes; the sculptor has his clay, his chisel, and his modelling tools; the poet has his words, rhythm, harmony, and rhyme. Every art has its different instruments; but the instrument of the actor is himself.

The *matter* of his art, that which he has to work upon and mould for the creation of his idea, is his own face, his own body, his own life. Hence it follows that the actor must have a double personality. He has his first self, which is the player, and his second self, which is the instrument. The first self

conceives the person to be created, or rather — for the conception belongs to the author — he sees him such as he was formed by the author, whether he be Tartuffe, Hamlet, Arnolphe, or Romeo, and the being that he sees is represented by his second self. This dual personality is the characteristic of the actor.

Not that the double nature is the exclusive property of actors alone; it undoubtedly exists among others. For example, my friend Alphonse Daudet takes delight in distinguishing this double element in the personality of the story-teller, and even the very expressions I am now using are borrowed from him. He confesses that he also has his first self and his second self — the one a man made like other men, who loves or hates, suffers or is happy; the other a being belonging to a higher sphere, whose balance nothing can disturb, and who in the midst of tumultuous emotions can observe, study, and take notes for the future creation of his characters.

But this double nature of the writer is neither so essential nor so conspicuous as that of the actor. The first self of the author watches the second self, but they never min-

gle. In the actor, on the contrary, the first self works upon the second till it is transfigured, and thence an ideal personage is evolved — in short, until from himself he has made his work of art.

When a painter is about to execute a portrait he first poses his model, and then, concentrating, as it were, in his brush all the striking features that his trained eye can seize, he transfers them to the canvas by the magic of his art, and when he has done this, his work is finished. The actor, however, has still something to do — he must himself enter into the picture. For *his* portrait must speak, act, walk in its frame, which is the stage, and it must convey the illusion of life to the spectator.

Therefore when the actor has a portrait to execute, that is, a part to create, he must first read the play carefully over many times, until he has grasped the intention of the author and the meaning of the character he is to represent, until he has a clear understanding of his personage, and *sees* him as he ought to be. When he attains to this, he has his model. Then, like the painter, he seizes each salient feature and transfers it, not to his

canvas, but to himself. He adapts each element of this personality to his second self. He sees Tartuffe in a certain costume, he wears it; he feels he has a certain face, he assumes it. He forces, if one may say so, his own face and figure into this imaginary mold, he recasts his own individuality, till the critic which is his first self declares he is satisfied, and finds that the result is really Tartuffe.

But this is by no means all, otherwise the resemblance would be only external; it would merely convey the outward form of the personage, not the personage himself. Tartuffe must be made to speak with the voice that he hears Tartuffe using, and in order consistently to represent the part the actor must learn to move, talk, gesticulate, listen, and also think, with the mind which he divines in Tartuffe.

Now, and not till now, is the picture completed; it is ready to be framed — I mean put on the stage — and instead of exclaiming, “Look at Geoffroy!” “Here comes Bressant!” or whoever it may be, the audience will cry, “Ah, this is Tartuffe!” if otherwise, your labor is lost.

To sum up, the first thing necessary must be a deep and careful study of the *character*; then there must be the conception by the first self, and the reproduction by the second, of the person such as his character inevitably makes him. This is the work of the actor.

Like Molière, he takes his own wherever he may find it; that is, to complete the resemblance he may add to his portrait any striking traits which he himself has observed in nature; thus Harpagon was composed of a thousand misers melted and cast in the mold of a masterly unity.

II

The two natures which coexist in the actor are inseparable, but it is the first self, the one which *sees*, which should be the master. This is the soul, the other is the body. It is the reason — the same reason that our friends the Chinese call the *Supreme Ruler*; and the second self is to the first what rhyme is to reason — a slave whose only duty is obedience.

The more absolute the subjection to this mistress, the greater the artist.

The ideal would be that the second self, the body, should be a soft mass of sculptor's clay, capable of assuming at will any form, who would become a charming *jeune premier* for Romeo, a diabolical and intellectually fascinating humpback for Richard III., for Figaro a ferret-faced valet with an expression of audacious impertinence. Then the actor would be all-accomplished, and granted he also had equivalent talents, he could undertake every part. Alas! nature forbids this: he would be too fortunate. However supple may be the body, however mobile may be the face, neither one nor other can be changed indefinitely at the will of the artist.

Sometimes it happens that a man's exterior will prevent him from acting certain parts which he is, notwithstanding, well able both to grasp and to expound. Sometimes nature relentlessly confines an actor to certain kinds of parts; but this touches the question of physique, of which I will speak later.

There are some in whom the *second self*, or the *ego*, rebels, on whom their own individuality exerts so much influence that they can never put it aside, and instead of their going to their rôle and clothing themselves

in its semblance, they make the rôle come to them and clothe itself in theirs.

This becomes another way of conceiving art, and I do not hesitate to pronounce it inferior to the first, although I am well aware how much can be done in this direction by a highly gifted artist.

The first drawback is that a man becomes, in a measure, the man of a single part; it also leads to the neglect of the study and digestion of the character — to me the only important thing — for the quest of that of the exterior, and of picturesque detail.

Of course picturesque detail is not to be despised, but it should never become the object of exclusive attention, and above all no picturesque trait, however natural, should ever be taken as the starting-point of a rôle.

It is the *character* that is the starting-point for everything.

If you have assimilated the essence of your personage, his exterior will follow quite naturally, and if there is any picturesqueness, it will come of itself. It is the mind which constructs the body.

If Mephistopheles is ugly, it is because his soul is hideous. I have seen him admirably

played in Vienna by Levinski, who represents him lame and hump-backed, which is quite appropriate to the character.

But Irving, who also made a name for himself in this rôle — Irving, who is a kind of methodical Mounet, setting great store by the exterior of his parts — Irving cannot avoid seeking after the picturesque even in his slightest movement. If he wishes to touch his chin, he raises his arm and encircles it, his hand makes the tour of his head, striking the audience as it does so with a sense of its leanness, and never seizes the point of his beard till after it has described a complete circle.

Rouvière exaggerated to the utmost this view of a character, and suffered the lay-figure which was in him to get the better of the actor.

The love of dramatic effect, and a very praiseworthy dislike of the hackneyed and commonplace, often induce very intelligent actors to err on this side. They choose first the aspects which they suppose to be characteristic of the person they can represent; then they allow themselves to be tempted by others which are purely picturesque, without

considering, or perhaps without caring, if they belong really to the part; and the end is a caricature, not a portrait; a monster or a puppet, never a human being.

Even from the point of view of immediate success, this method of proceeding has one great drawback. The public tires of nothing so quickly as mere picturesqueness of effect. Your entrance once over, they pay no further heed to you; you have missed fire if you have not style, delivery, and the development of the character to fall back on. The style is the man, said M. de Buffon.

More than this: if by a misplaced anxiety to individualize your part you end by catching up a trick, oh, then beware! Instead of amusing your audience, you will prejudice them against you. The public, though it may laugh the first time, will soon become bored, and will not fail to convey its feelings to you by coldness and reserve, or by something more disagreeable still.

III

Do not misunderstand me. I forbid no one to borrow from observation of a model

the peculiarities which betray the inner man. As I have said above, it is one of the necessary qualities of the actor to be able to seize and note at once anything that is capable of reproduction on the stage; but these traits must be adopted with discretion. For example, those must be avoided which are purely individual; the actor must take care not to adopt the characteristics of some special miser whom he may know but whom the public does not know, but instead he should give, as Harpagon, the concentrated essence of *all misers*, which his audience would recognize instantly.

There was one actor, Lesueur, who was preëminent in this art of true portraiture. No one has ever done more with his second self, or created out of his own personality characters more different in themselves, or with more intense expression. It was really astonishing. But then he studied with the fury of enthusiasm. In his house there was a sort of dark room, with closed windows and locked doors, where he used to shut himself in with his costumes, his wigs, and all his paraphernalia. There, alone before his mirror, he would sit trying experiments with his

face by the light of the lamps. He would make up twenty, he would make up a hundred, times, before he would succeed in producing the ideal which he felt to be the true one, and of which he could say, "Yes, that is he."

And when he had put the finishing touch to the likeness, he would work for hours at one wrinkle. The result was so extraordinary that judges of acting will never forget his absinthe-drinker, his madmen, nor his old gentleman playing piquet. He was one day Monsieur Poirier, that incarnation of the middle classes, and the next he would be Don Quixote, the type of starving knight-errantry. When he entered the stage in this last part, although he was really a small man, it seemed as if there was no end to his stature, he seemed to draw himself out, like a telescope, till he was as long as his lance. It was indeed the hero of Cervantes in all the melancholy of his interminable leanness.

But in spite of this wonderful talent, fortified by a close study of his parts, he lacked one element necessary to make the illusion complete — command of his voice. He

never could manage to train his, and it remained to the last, in all his parts, the voice of Lesueur — very comic, but always comic in the same way, and with a terribly ponderous articulation. In the ‘Chapeau d’un Horloger’ he has to say, “*Monsieur, madame me désire,*” and he pronounced it, “madameu meu désieureu.”

Now articulation is to speech what drawing is to painting.

A single sentence of Samson’s, articulated as he knew how to articulate, was as good as a portrait by M. Ingres for enabling you to grasp the character of the person he was representing.

When this master in the art of speaking appeared in ‘*Mademoiselle de La Seiglière,*’ if you had had your eyes shut you would have known from the way in which he put the question, “*Jasmin, Madame La Baronne de Vaubert n’est pas encore arrivée?*” what manner of man he was.

It was the insolent *grand seigneur*, who looks on Jasmin as a being of different clay to himself, the empty-headed *émigré*, the egoist to whom it is nothing if Madame de Vaubert should have arrived or not, who

makes the inquiry merely from politeness, mingled with a certain anxiety as to what effect her absence will have in delaying breakfast, after which he, the Marquis de La Seiglière, must be starting again, mighty hunter as he is before the Lord.

And when he referred to Bonaparte — to “Monsieur de Buonaparte” — he would catch himself up in order to exalt his enemy, so that the honor might redound on himself, for the sole object of M. de Buonaparte in winning so many victories had been to gain him, the Marquis de La Seiglière, over to his cause, and he, the Marquis, had turned a deaf ear to all his advances — to Marengo, Austerlitz, and Jena. The simple articulation of the syllables was enough to convey the *naïve* self-sufficiency of the man, and all his headstrong pride of race.

The power of a true inflection of the voice is incalculable, and all the picturesque exteriors in the world will not move an audience like one cry given with the right intonation. Articulation therefore should be the first study of the actor.

The public *must* understand every word he says, however quickly he may say it. A

word must be able to draw tears or laughter from the mere manner of its articulation.

The voice should not be less finely trained than the exterior. It belongs to the second self, and should be specially supple, expressive, and rich in modifications of tone. According to the part, the voice should be caressing, smooth, insinuating, mocking, bold, eager, tender, despairing. You should be able to ring the changes from the clarionet to the bugle.

The lover's voice is not like the lawyer's voice. Iago has not the voice of Figaro, nor Figaro the voice of Tartuffe. Intonation, key, and note all differ with the rôle. As Madelon says, "It contains the chromatic scale." In a word, your character should be drawn and portrayed so that even the blind may see him by your articulation, your delivery, and your intonation.

All this should be added to the care that you bestow on your exterior; with the same minuteness as Lesueur, if you will, provided it be also with the same truth to nature. I mean always keeping in mind the character of which the exterior is only the illustration — the person who must be set before men's

very eyes without the deformity which comes from exaggeration.

Physiognomy, gesture, and voice should all make one whole. It often happens that characters which are apparently quite insignificant need the greatest efforts of metamorphosis on the part of the actor. For instance, look at Thouvenin in 'Denise.' One would think I could not have a more easy rôle than this extremely simple one. I am not speaking now of my success, but only of my struggles to attain it, of my long hours of study of the character. Thouvenin takes no part in the action; he talks and argues as any honest man would, as I might do myself any day. That is the very rock on which I might wreck myself. In virtue of the relationship between this personage and the man that is in me, the man such as I am in common life, I may be tempted to endow him with my gestures, to make him speak with my voice — to be, in fact, Monsieur Coquelin; and if I did this, I should have betrayed the author, who required that I should be Thouvenin. So it was necessary to watch more carefully than usual to restrain myself, to correct my ordinary ways, to modify my

walk, to tone down the eagerness of my voice, to keep only the exact vibration that is required for the great speech at the end; to mold my physiognomy in such a manner as to give to Thouvenin his appropriate exterior as an ex-working man who has educated himself and fills creditably his place in the world, but who brings to bear on the usages and conventions of society a liberty of judgment and an originality of language which reveal at once his origin and his character.

The special advantage of a serious study of the parts is to facilitate these transformations. Samson and Regnier hardly ever painted their faces; they contrived to change their expressions solely from within. In this art, as in so many others, Frédérick was the greatest master. The word *transfiguration* was applied for the first time, as far as I know, to an actor when he appeared in 'Ruy Blas' with such splendid success. Transfiguration will hardly be thought too strong a word to describe the successive representations of Robert Macaire and Ruy Blas. His personifications of the scoundrel, with his shabby hideousness, and of the servant and lover of the Queen, with the tragic splendor of his

face, were alike the work of a master; for he was beautiful in 'Ruy Blas.' He contrived to throw a shadow of passionate melancholy over everything that was irregular, sharp, and severe in his countenance, till nothing was left but the light of genius, and he seemed to put on beauty like a mask. As no one ever had more accentuated features than he, he deserved all the more credit for his extraordinary transformations. This power is not given to all. Not even the hardest work will enable us always to grasp it; and this brings us back to the question of *physique*, so important on the stage.

IV

As I have said before, the exterior of an actor, certain details of his physical conformation, of his "architecture," may confine him exclusively to one special kind of part.

There are men whom nature has made *lovers* to the end of time, like Delaunay; there are *duennas* from the cradle, like Madame Jouassain. This indication of a special line often arises from some very slight peculiarity — from the angle made by the

nose with the horizon, for example. But on the subject of the influence of the nose, everyone should read what Pascal says of Cleopatra: "The destinies of the world would have been different had Cleopatra's nose been shorter." One sort of face only suits tragedy, or, at most, serious comedy. Another face, bristling with queer irregularities, is out of place save in farce.

Happy indeed are these actors if their physique which forces them into a certain line allows them to add to it by the help of their talent an amount of universal truth and humanity sufficient to constitute a type. They will leave their image and an undying recollection behind them. This was the case with Henry Monnier in M. Prudhomme. He was never anything but M. Prudhomme; he could not be anything else; but he created in the person of M. Prudhomme a face which has become traditional, a type, a representation of an epoch and of a class. He and his creation will live forever.

But do not misunderstand me. The actor of one part, however fine a study it may be, is inferior to the actor who has the command of many.

It is also an error to hold that the only really admirable creations are those in which the outward conformity of the actor with his rôle is absolute and entire.

Frédérick created a type which is, in its way, quite as immortal as M. Prudhomme. This was Robert Macaire, to which I have already alluded, and to which I shall have occasion again to refer. To Frédéric alone the creation is due, but this did not prevent him from also creating Ruy Blas.

Notwithstanding, he resembled in himself neither the one nor the other of these two persons, whom he may be said to have almost amalgamated in Don César, and he would be a bold man who would dare to affirm that he was better as an artist in one than in the other. He was, in truth, wonderful in comedy, and sublime in tragedy. He had great powers, and his face was not of a kind to interfere with their outward expression.

The truth is that as long as an actor is free from any natural defects of structure, as long as his countenance is not more laughable nor more unpleasing than the countenances of the generality of men, and the face is sufficiently mobile, even though it may lack beauty, to be

able to assume at will a dramatic expression — given all these things, there is no reason why he should not distinguish himself both in comedy and tragedy.

It is all a question of degree, and of course a question of talent. It is hardly necessary to quote instances; they abound everywhere, and it is impossible it should be otherwise.

Tragedy and comedy are so closely blended in the contemporary stage that the capacity for the double impersonation is demanded of nearly all. Look at Regnier, my dear master. What admirable creations we owe to him! Was it laughter he provoked in 'Gabrielle,' or in 'Le Supplice d'une Femme'? And who will ever forget him as Balandard in 'Une Chaîne,' or the shouts of irresistible merriment which he raised all through the theater?

Physical beauty, or charm, is indispensable to *jeunes premiers*. In order to make and to receive gracefully declarations of love before an audience, it is necessary to possess no peculiarity which can excite a smile. The actor must either be handsome or able to appear so.

For there is a difference. It is possible to

appear handsome, and to have the power of attracting all hearts, without being in the least a model of beauty. I am sure I shall not wound the feelings of my friend Delaunay if I say that his nose is not exactly Grecian in its outline; and yet no one more fascinating ever appeared on the stage. He had so much charm, something so ineffably young and tender and airy, something which I do not hesitate to say has left the stage with him.

Charm, that is the one thing needful for the *jeunes premiers*. How is it that certain faces have so much of it that are entirely destitute of classical beauty? In what does their attraction lie? Why is it they can bewitch women? It is a problem I cannot undertake to solve. All I know is, let a man succeed in fascinating a single woman, and the rest will run after him. We are all like the sheep of Panurge, and women are the ewes.

As regards the *jeunes premières*, the case is the same. Beauty is not essential, but charm is. We all recollect what Victor Hugo said to Madame Dorval — “You are not beautiful; you are worse!” The charm

which he felt, which he described exactly in this epigram, was the charm of genius; of the genius of the stage. So stage lovers must be handsome, like Laferrière, or look so, like Delaunay. The public, like their sweet-hearts, must fall in love with them at first sight; they must belong to the class who are worshipped from their cradles. Not that all love need be confined to them. On the contrary, one sees every day in our modern plays persons far less gifted outwardly than these *jeunes premiers* rob them in the long-run of their myrtles and laurels. But only in the long-run. Never at once. They win love by their genius, by their courage, by their devotion, and this love only grows with time, and the audience has gradually to get accustomed to the idea of it.

To take myself as an example, if I may be allowed to do such a thing, the audience would never for a moment suffer that on my entrance on the stage in the first act, I should receive a declaration of love from a beautiful woman.

I have, however, acted Jean Dacier, where I ended by being loved by a girl of noble birth. But I did not receive her confession

till the last act, and then only because I was at the point of death. But it was love that gave the piece its success, and the public accepted it, and watched its progress with interest, because, plow-boy as I was in the first act, then soldier, and finally officer, I raised myself from one height of devotion to another, till I merited the supreme honor of being loved by my wife, for the lady was my wife.

I have been bitterly reproached by many critics for wishing to play serious parts. On this point my artistic conscience is perfectly easy. I have never played parts which were beyond me. No one ever saw me act a lover. Jean Dacier is a character. Who could call Le Luthier de Crémone a lover? He is a humpback whom nobody loves. And Chamillac? He is an eccentric person, a sort of mustached apostle, who atones for a moment of madness, and who wins love indeed, but only in the end. It is a part full of reserve and capable of expression, but without the excitement of passion. And Gringoire, the unlucky poet condemned to the gallows, can *he* be called a lover? The very first *word* he hears from the girl when her eyes

are directed to him is, "*Il n'est pas beau.*" This is the position, and if I succeed in the end in winning love, it is with the help of poetry and of pity, it is that I am transformed by the aid of song, at any rate in the fancy of the maiden.

There is a race of actors who cannot get outside the limits of prose, others who are bound to be lyrical. I have done my best to belong to the latter class, and it is partly owing to my friends among the poets who have so often intrusted their verses to me. The most culpable of all is the most lyrical of all — Banville, the father of Gringoire, for whose divine Socrates and many other winged strophes it has been my happy lot to win applause, strophes instinct with the eternal dawn which glows in the heart of their author.

V

It is obvious that this essay rests on the theory with which I started, that in the actor the first self should be the master of the second; that the part of us which *sees* should rule as absolutely as possible the part of us which *executes*. Though this is always true,

it is specially true of the moment of representation. In other words, the actor should remain master of himself. Even when the public, carried away by his action, conceives him to be abandoned to his passion, he should be able to *see* what he is doing, to judge of his effects, and to control himself — in short, he should never feel the shadow of the sentiments to which he is giving expression at the very instant that he is representing them with the utmost power and truth.

I will not return to what I have already said on this subject in 'Art and the Actor' but I emphatically repeat it. Study your part, make yourself one with your character, but in doing this never set aside your own individuality. Keep the control of yourself. Whether your second self weeps or laughs, whether you become frenzied to madness or suffer the pains of death, it must always be under the watchful eye of your ever-impassive first self, and within certain fixed and prescribed bounds.

The best mode of representing a part once decided on, it should henceforth never vary. You must grasp your conception in such a manner as to be able to recall the image you

have created, identical down to the minutest particular, when and where you please.

The actor ought never to let his part "run away" with him. It is false and ridiculous to think that it is a proof of the highest art for the actor to forget that he is before the public. If you identify yourself with your part to the point of asking yourself, as you look at the audience, "What are all those people doing here?" — if you have no more consciousness where you are and what you are doing — you have ceased to be an actor: you are a madman. And a dangerous madman too. Conceive Harpagon climbing the balustrade and seizing the orchestra by the throats, loudly demanding the restoration of his casket!

Art is, I repeat, not identification, but representation.

The famous maxim, If you wish to make me cry, you must cry yourself, is therefore not applicable to the actor. If he has really to cry, he would, more likely than not, make his audience laugh; for tragedy often becomes comedy to the spectators, and sorrow frequently expresses itself in a grimace.

I can quite well understand how a young

man on his first appearance should lose himself in his part, and get *run away* with. Un-easy as to his reception by the public, the emotions which he has to represent become confounded with his personal feelings. This has occurred to me as well as to every one else, and I can recall it without shame, for I was then only seventeen years old. I was acting in public for the first time, and my part was *Pauvre Jacques*. *Pauvre Jacques* is an unhappy musician who goes mad from being crossed in love (another proof that I was early corrupted by my preference for tragic parts). I was suffocated with emotion; still I managed somehow to act, and perhaps some of the audience were moved to tears, but when I went behind the scenes I know I felt quite ill. This is the way with all raw recruits. But if it were to happen to me to-day, I should consider myself dishonored. A practised actor should be beyond the reach of such accidents.

I am aware that this theory has been questioned by many great artists. I remember an intelligent and appropriate remark made on the subject to Madame Ristori by a young English lady full of artistic instincts. Ma-

dame Ristori was arguing that the actor could only represent truly what he was really feeling. "But, madame," said Miss T——, "what happens when you have to die?" Plainly Madame Ristori had no intention of really dying. She acted as if she were dying, and acted extremely well, for she had previously studied, considered, and determined the manner of her death, and when the moment of representation came, she rendered her fixed impressions with all her wonderful intelligence, with the full force of her vigor and of her self-possession.

Occasionally an actor who is completely master of himself may indulge in experiments before the public, for he knows that he has himself in hand, and can always pull up. Those who have not their faculties perfectly under control run a great risk of losing their heads, and not being able to regain their self-possession for the rest of the evening. And the worst of it is that it is invariably those actors who are always trying new tricks. As they never have a firm grip of their character, they are incessantly experimenting on it. They even go the length of glorying in the fact. I once overheard some one say of

Worms, "I don't care to see him act; I know exactly what he is going to do." At any rate, the speaker might have known that everything Worms did would be done well, and, after all, is not that the chief thing? It is more satisfactory than to watch an actor who, for all we know, will be perpetrating some folly the next minute? That reminds one of the Englishman who followed Batty, the lion-tamer, from place to place in the hope of one day seeing him torn in pieces by his own lions. The interest of the theater appears to me to be of quite another kind.

VI

There still remains the delicate question, how far great intelligence is necessary to the actor. There is much to be said on both sides. Examples are by no means rare of actors and actresses who have varied talents. Many are distinguished in literature, in painting, and in both, not to mention in ballooning.

But, after all, this intelligence is a superfluous luxury; the only intelligence indispensable to the actor is *that which belongs to his art*.

Some one, I forget who, once told me that the only French poetry Corot knew was "Polyeucte," and he had never read all of that. But this did not prevent him from being a wonderful landscape-painter, and a poet down to the tip of his brush.

In the same way an actor may be totally ignorant of painting, of music, of poetry even, and yet be a good actor, and a poetical actor. It is enough for him to be steeped in his own art, which is different from these others.

And though it is different, it is equally important, and it is unfair to scoff at the special intelligence of the actor. The faculties which can touch and move men are by no means to be despised. And it is not the case that it is the author alone who gives rise to these emotions. To those who hold this I would instance Talma, Frédérick, and multitudes of others who created their own parts out of what was originally absolutely insignificant. It was to their skill and genius alone that the public owed that profound, almost divine, trouble which seizes all of us when we contemplate beauty which rends for the moment the veil

of our egotism, and which is the sensation that approaches most nearly to love.

It has been said of endless pieces, "What an absurd play, but wasn't Frédérick magnificent!" Take Robert Macaire, to which I have already alluded — was not the creation of this character a prodigy, showing to what heights an actor's special intelligence can rise? The very authors were the first to be struck dumb at this astonishing conception, which substituted for their solemn puppet an imperishable comic figure.

The dramatic art is, above all, the art of humanity, and this is what makes a play the highest of pleasures, the pleasure which moves the people most powerfully, while it offers to the refined the most exquisite enjoyments.

In my opinion, therefore, it should always remain an *art*; that is, it should add the sweetness of poetry and the representation of the ideal to the expression of truth.

"Naturalism" on the stage is a mistake. In the first place the public won't have it. It always resents the exhibition of revolting hideousness, of pitiless and naked realities. People do not come to the theater for that

sort of thing. Even in parts that are vile and degraded they demand a gleam of ideality. Paulin Ménier as Choppard appears at first revolting in his debased realism, but it is not so. There is a certain reckless touch about the character which does something to redeem it: "*Eh bien! quoi prenez ma tête — c'est pas un fameux cadeau que je vous fais là!*" How defiance was hurled at Death! his power was mocked at. It was the gleam of the ideal.

Just as I would not allow any departure from truth on the plea of picturesque effects, so I would not permit a representation of commonplace or horrible things on the pretext of reality.

I am always on the side of nature, and against naturalism.

Nature in art! How much there is to say about it!

It is a subject that is understood differently according to the country and the century.

When Garrick came over to France he admired our actors greatly, but thought they were hardly natural enough. Perhaps some one will say the reason was because they were acting tragedies. But when Talma appeared

he introduced into tragedy a natural manner of speaking and moving, and it was to this that he owed his influence and his success. Was his idea of what was natural the same as Garrick's? I do not know; for the genius of the two races is very different, and the love of originality is too deep-seated in our neighbors to allow them always to use a due measure of self-restraint; and anyway to-day it is we who find fault with Irving for not being sufficiently natural.

The English idea of "nature" does not correspond with ours: that is the whole truth of the matter. We must also make reserves as to the German conception of nature, unnaturally tearful, resembling in its philosophic affectations the "nature" of Diderot and the susceptible school at the end of the eighteenth century.

It was they who, we must remind our readers, were really the innovators. The style which to our ears rings so false was introduced by them to the stage in the name of "nature." And it was likewise in the name of nature that the standard of the romanticists was raised — a standard which to-day is thrown aside and trampled in the

dust by those who are weary of grandiloquence and of posing. They desired to substitute for conventional tragedy a drama which is really human, in which smiles and tears are mingled, and gave us 'Antony,' 'La Tour de Nesle,' 'Lucrèce Borgia.' With the same object in view, Baron Taylor collaborated with the well-known and delightful Nodier, and put on the stage 'Melmouth, ou l'Homme errant,' 'Les Vampires,' 'Honte et Remords,' 'Amour et Étourderie,' etc. These were obviously "natural" in quite another sense from that of Voltaire; and the actors, making common cause with the authors, declared Talma to be unnatural. They took it into their heads to speak as people "really speak," in such a way that no one could hear them, and to sit with their backs to the audience. They recited the poetry of 'Athalie' precisely as they would have said, "Good-morning, how are you?" "Good heavens, yes," said Abner, "I have come to worship the Almighty in His temple. I have come just as I am, cane in hand, to celebrate with my friends the famous occasion on Mount Sinai, where, if I am not vastly mistaken, the law was given to us.

Sapristi! how times have changed! ” They flattered themselves that in this manner they were introducing “ nature ” into Racine. On the other hand, when they were on their own ground, that is, in the melodramas, the emphasis of the meter once more reasserted itself. It was not indeed the sepulchral and monotonous singsong of yore; it was a halting kind of sublimity — wild bursts of verse, and a sudden alacrity in sinking. They no longer said, “ How are you? ” but “ Let me grasp that manly hand.” There were hidden meanings everywhere. They wore an air of doom from head to foot. It was an era of hat and feather. But is there no feather on the hat of M. Zola? Were he to have his way we should be threatened with a new madness of extremes, but this time it would be the extreme of the trivial and commonplace. What I mean by art that is natural in the modern sense is equally remote from both these extremes. It is classic rather than romantic, for everywhere it regards limit, everywhere it shuns violent antitheses.

The actor with this ideal does not give an exaggerated importance to different aspects

of his part. He does not try to play three or four different characters at once; he aims, on the other hand, at unity and a broad general representation of humanity. He sees things as they are, but he conforms to the general rules of theatrical conventions, and to the particular necessities of the part he is interpreting. The "nature" of the tragedy differs from that of the melodrama, and that again from the comedy, and it is impossible to render it in the same way. Hence Frédérick ought never to be reproached for not acting always naturally. The kind of parts he undertook demanded certain exaggerations. He would, after the manner of his school, speak ten lines in a conventional fashion, in order to be able to give to the eleventh a truer and more natural ring. He was forced to say the verses as they were written, and when he at last made his point with the true intonation, it left behind it a deeper impression of naturalness than the foregoing lines had done of unreality.

And here I must close, for this is not a formal treatise on acting, still less an apology.

Every artist in speaking of his art seems in some degree a special pleader. Of course he only wishes to preach what he believes to be true, and that which he believes to be true is what he tries to do himself. I have said what the comedian should be, but I am far from flattering myself that I realize my ideal, and if I have alluded to myself, it is only for the sake of illustrating more clearly my arguments. I should have preferred to erase any personal note from these pages, as I have always tried to do from my parts, where my wish is to be, to enter into, nothing but the characters I play. For, after all, that is the essential point, and it is with that I must end. Is not the greatest poet he who has managed to efface himself the most entirely, in whose pages you find every kind of man, but never himself?

It was thus with the father of poetry, Homer; it was thus with Shakespeare and with Molière: all are absent from their works, where humanity in its thousand varied aspects lives eternally.

Herein standeth our honor, the honor of all us players, namely, in this, that these two

men, its chief creators after God, were players like ourselves. Therefore should we study their works religiously and without ceasing, nor ever turn from them, save it be to peruse that eternal Comedy of Human Nature.

CONSTANT COQUELIN

II

M. COQUELIN ON ACTORS AND ACTING

It is some years since I had the privilege of recording in this Review a few casual observations connected with the Drama. They related chiefly to characters in Shakespeare, and had no personal drift. My renewal of them now is suggested by the article which M. Coquelin has contributed to the May number of *Harper's Magazine*, and by certain personal considerations which are an inevitable result when one player has undertaken to criticise his fellows. As a rule, this kind of review is much to be deprecated, for it is easy to conceive that, if every artist were to rush into print with his opinions of his compeers, there would be a disagreeable rise in the social temperature. Criticism is generally sufficient in the hands of the professors of the art; but when an actor takes up its

functions for the enlightenment of other actors, and, with the freedom of M. Coquelin, invites comparisons and suggests parallels, he runs no little risk of a grave misapprehension of his purpose. I take it for granted, however, that in this instance the object of the writer is to lay down certain immutable principles of the actor's art.

I do not propose to follow M. Coquelin through the details of his thesis, which contains a comforting proportion of truisms. Nor is it necessary to devote much space to the initial difficulty — which, by the way, he only discovers at the end of his discourse — namely, the difference between English and French ideas of natural acting. This difference may be considerable enough, but it need not be made greater by hasty generalisation. Even my insular training does not, I hope, disqualify me from an intelligent admiration of M. Coquelin's genuine accomplishments; nor does it, I venture to think, blunt my perception of the misdirected zeal with which he associates the elements necessary to make up the art of what he calls true portraiture. In a word, I believe that he completely misses the vital essence of trag-

edy, and that his criticism is of the earth, earthy.

It is hardly within the scope of this note that I should discuss with M. Coquelin as to how far the resources of a comedian may be suitable for tragic parts. There seems to be a deep-rooted conviction in his mind that the qualities which enable an actor to observe certain types of character, and to embody their salient features in a consistent whole, will invariably enable him to scale the heights of the poetic drama. But the most odd feature of this assumption is his labor to prove that an actor must give to each character a separate physiological maintenance, so that every fresh impersonation may begin the world with a new voice and a new body. That an artist, with an individuality so marked as M. Coquelin's, should imagine that his identity can be entirely lost seems singular. It must be granted that this art of transformation, even in part, is of great importance in that large range of the drama where M. Coquelin is quite at home, and where the purely mimetic faculty has its chief significance. When, however, we are asked to believe that the representation of a great

tragic part depends on the simulation of a physical apparatus which the actor has not previously exhibited, we must seek refuge in a respectful incredulity. It would almost seem as if M. Coquelin, in the midst of his dissertation on the significance of a wrinkle, had lost sight of the fact that in tragedy and the poetic drama it is rather the *soul* of the artist than his form which is molded by the theme. Edmund Kean sometimes passed from one part to another with little more external variation than was suggested by a corked mustache; but the poetry, the intensity, the fiery passion of the man, made his acting the most real and vivid impersonation that his contemporaries had seen. M. Coquelin perhaps takes it for granted that the actress is exempt from the burden of change — the perpetual metamorphosis — to which he dooms the actor. If there be no such exemption, then the task of the artist who must vary her face and figure for Rosalind, Juliet, and Imogen is likely to become unpopular. What did Rachel owe to any transformation of physique? She, as M. Coquelin must be well aware, was the most trained actress of her time. She knew all that Samson could teach;

she spared no elaboration of art; but all this experience and labor would have counted for little without the divine fire which made her so great. This electric quality is the rarest and the highest gift the actor can possess. It is a quality which, in varying degrees, distinguishes those who tread the highest walks in the drama, and which has given fame to-day to Salvini, Barnay, Booth, and Mounet-Sully.

When M. Coquelin maintains that an actor should never exhibit real emotion, he is treading old and disputed ground. It matters little whether the player shed tears or not, so long as he can make his audience shed them; but if tears can be summoned at his will and subject to his control, it is true art to utilize such a power, and happy is the actor whose sensibility has at once so great a delicacy and discipline. In this respect the actor is like the orator. Eloquence is all the more moving when it is animated and directed by a fine and subtle sympathy which affects the speaker though it does not master him. It is futile to deny absolutely to the actor such impulses as touch the heart by the sudden appeal of passion or pathos. Kean was not a player

who left anything to hazard, and yet he had inspired moments, which anyone holding M. Coquelin's views might ascribe to insanity. Diderot and Talma pointed out — and M. Coquelin repeats the lesson — that an actor has a dual consciousness — the inspiring and directing self, and the executive self. Yet, it was also Talma who remarked that an actor will often leave the stage at the end of a scene, trying to remember what he has done, instead of thinking what he has still to do. This, at all events, is idealism in art, and my complaint of M. Coquelin is that he seems to allow to idealism only a very small place in his philosophy. Not the least striking illustration of this defect is his proposition that a hideous soul should have a hideous body, and that Mephistopheles should therefore be represented as an image of deformity. History and fiction alike rebel against such a dictum; for, if this critic be right, then the Borgias, Iago, Macbeth, Tito, Ulric, should embody moral disease in their physical tissue. It is true that Mephistopheles need not be a handsome demon, but why should a hump be a symbol of cynicism? Some of the most exquisite spirits that ever reflected the radiance

of divine love upon earth have been shrouded in ugliness! The greatest infamy in Italian history smiles down upon us in old picture galleries from the perfection of manly dignity and the most delicate loveliness of woman. M. Coquelin's conception is as primitive as the orthodoxy which used to insist that the devil wore horns and a tail. The demand that the incarnation of evil shall be preëminently distinguished by physical distortion is, to say the least of it, scarcely in harmony with the enlightenment of our age. 'Faust' is a mixture of legend and philosophy — a great human drama, with the intense reality of life overshadowed by the supernatural. Mephistopheles is both man and spirit, and should not the actor suggest to the imagination of the spectators an almost exaggerated idea of the commanding, all-embracing influence of the evil principle, while presenting the personality of the "squire of high degree"? It is impossible to represent such a creation in any adequate fashion without summoning picturesque aids to heighten the spiritual effect of the play. To what extent the picturesque may be legitimately carried in dramatic art will always be a moot

point. "Picturesque" is a word often used vaguely, but if it mean beauty — the selection of what is pleasing and harmonious in illustration — then by all means let us be picturesque. To discard this element in action, color, and expression, would surely be a serious error. I fear that if I understand M. Coquelin aright, his philosophy is much more material than would be expected from an actor who tells us that he is nothing if not "lyrical."

There is, of course, much in M. Coquelin's article that is true and that is admirably put — notwithstanding that he frequently upsets in one paragraph the proposition of another. Nobody would deny that the study of character is the foundation of our art, or that the detail which is foreign to a character ought not to be presented for the sake of theatrical effect. But the essay is not a primer for beginners, it is addressed to the writer's colleagues and contemporaries. It deals out praise in this quarter and blame in that, and it has a strong flavor of autobiography. This distinguished comedian scarcely does justice to his intelligence when he forgets that no two actors of any originality will

play the same part alike. An actor must either think for himself or imitate someone else. Such imitation produces a reverence for certain stage traditions that is sometimes mischievous, because an actor is tempted to school himself too closely to traditional interpretation, instead of giving fair play to his own insight. Probably it is of our departure from this rule that M. Coquelin is thinking when he sighs over "the deep-seated love of originality" in the English race. But that originality, after all, is only the very natural assertion of the principle that the representation of character can never be cast in one unchanging mold. The individual force of the actor must find its special channel. Salvini's Othello is a great impersonation, but judging from all we know of Edmund Kean's performance of the Moor, it differed widely from the Italian's. There seem to be no difficult problems in Othello's character, and yet it would be idle to expect a succession of great actors to play the part in precisely the same way. M. Coquelin divides actors into two classes — those who identify themselves with their characters, and those who identify their characters with themselves. Excellent as this

definition is, it is somewhat misleading. M. Coquelin tells us that when he played Thouvenin, it was his greatest difficulty to repress his own idiosyncrasies. His study was to efface Coquelin entirely — voice, walk, gesture — and to present only the man he conceived Thouvenin to be. This is very good as far as it goes; but why should Edwin Booth, when he acts the part of Hamlet, try to forget that, physically speaking, he was ever Edwin Booth? His mind is absorbed in the character — he looks and speaks the melancholy, the passion, the poetry, and the satire of this supreme creation; yet is he to be told that, if in some detail of aspect, gesture, or movement, he remind the audience that he still be Edwin Booth, he is making the character a part of himself, instead of losing his own nature for the time in the world of imagination? The actor who portrays with the grandest power the Titanic force and energy of Lear, or the malignity and hypocrisy of Shylock, will be truer to the poet than another who interests us chiefly in the characteristics of age or a type of the Jewish race. M. Coquelin would, I fear, in tragedy teach us to be too prosaic; for however important realistic por-

traiture may be in the comic drama — and there are noteworthy examples of its success on the English as well as the French stage — in tragedy it has a comparatively minor place.

HENRY IRVING

III

COQUELIN—IRVING

M. Coquelin is an accomplished comedian, whose great natural gifts were cultivated in the College of the Histrionic Art, the *Comédie Française*, where he graduated as a star.

Mr. Irving is a comedian who has had no collegiate training for the stage, as there is no school of art in England.

The Frenchman, therefore, acquired his principles before he acquired his experience. The Englishman acquired his practice from which he deduced his principles. These two artists discuss the pathology of tragedy. They describe the artistic process by which the tragic actor embodies the passions delineated by the tragic poet.

We cannot regard Mr. Irving as a tragedian. He is a versatile character actor, who, like Frederick Lemaitre, plays everything, but shines chiefly in character parts. Fred-

erick was equally great in 'Ruy Blas' and 'Robert Macaire'; Irving is equally great in 'Louis the Eleventh' and 'Jeremy Diddler.' But Frederick was not a Talma, and Irving is not an Edmund Kean.

It is questionable, therefore, whether these two eminent artists are equipped with experience of the kind required to pass judgment on this matter. Let us see!

Comedy aspires to portray by imitation the *weaknesses* to which human beings are subject; and, it may be, to correct such frailties by their exposure to our ridicule. Character, in our dramatic sense, is the distinction between individuals, and it is exhibited by *the manner* in which each bears and expresses his or her trouble, or deals with his neighbors.

Tragedy aspires to portray the *passions* to which strong natures are subject, and a resistance to their influence. But strong natures exhibit no distinctive character. Heroes are monotonous. Othello, Richard, Macbeth, Lear, Hamlet, are great sufferers from various causes, but they suffer alike; they all cry in the same histrionic key. Edwin Booth, Forrest, Macready, Kean, Salvini, always presented the same man in a different cos-

tume. Rachel was always Rachel. Bernhardt is always Bernhardt. But Irving in 'Louis the Eleventh' is not Irving in 'Mephistopheles.' Coquelin in the 'Lute Player of Cremona' is not Coquelin in the 'Duc de Septmonts.'

We may surmise, therefore, that as the object of the comedian differs so diametrically from the object of the tragedian, the principles and the practice of one of these branches of the same art may not be applicable to the other.

M. Coquelin denies poetic *afflatus* and impulsive effusion to the tragedian. He claims that every feature in the actor's face, every note in his voice must be under his complete control, as the musical instrument is to the performer. In this opinion he is backed by Shakspeare, who counsels the tragedian "in the torrent and tempest of his passions to beget a temperance that will give it smoothness." But it may be said this is, meaningly, an advice to repress rant.

May I, without intrusion, exemplify from personal experience the action of the mind under the two different affections while engaged in tragic and comic composition?

While writing comedy the mind of the dramatist is circumspect and calculating, careful in the selection of thoughts, a fastidious spectator of the details of his work, thoroughly self-conscious and deliberate. Such is not the condition of his mind when writing tragic scenes, or scenes of deep pathos. The mind of the poet becomes abstract, his thoughts shape themselves into language — the passion wields his pen. The utterance is impulsive — he is an actor, not a spectator in the scene, and when he awakes from this transport of the mind he looks round to recover consciousness of where he is! Surely every author must have experienced this illusion, and under these circumstances. I have never known, in all my experience, that scenes so composed have failed, when fairly acted, to convey a like emotion to the audience.

M. Coquelin says the voice of the heart is inartistic; it must be controlled and molded by the brain! Yes! in comedy — into which the emotions alluded to never enter, or, if so, in a very modified degree. I am not a tragedian; therefore can only speak with much reserve; but if the poet, under the great im-

pulse of tragic composition, can lose his perfect self-control, and in that state his thoughts shape themselves into exquisite language, if grammar and spelling become instinctive work, as the pen follows the mind without circumspection or aforethought; if this can be with the poet, may it not be likewise with the tragedian? May not the rules and principles of his art be so much a part of his nature that he can give rein to his passional spasm while retaining his seat and control of Pegasus? If he fail to do so, he becomes, I admit, ridiculous; but if he succeed, he mounts to the verge and edge of the sublime. Such a feat can only be safely attempted by the perfectly trained artist. When novices give way to their effusion they inevitably become grotesque.

M. Coquelin describes his method of building up a character. It affords an admirable lesson to comedians, and should be preserved as an imperishable record in the archives of our art. But as comedy is largely a physiological study, tragedy is largely pathologic. Doubtless there are many great tragic figures in the drama that should be treated from the outside, as are the great comic figures; but

this part of them is comedy; such for example is the grim comedy of 'Louis the Eleventh.' And, in so far and so much, the play is less purely tragic. The process, therefore, so valuably detailed by the French comedian is applicable to comedy only, inasmuch as it is applicable only to the molding of character, and character belongs to comedy.

Salvini goes so far as to declare that domestic passions, such as love, are beneath the grandeur and dignity of the tragic muse. I suggested that 'Othello' and 'Lear,' and even 'Romeo and Juliet' were able to stand beside any works of Sophocles. He could not admit they were so. He regarded them as being on a lower plane.

I concede to M. Coquelin that the tragedian of the day follows the principles he has laid down, but with all the admiration justly due to great merit, I doubt the application of Zolaism to our art. For example: The last scene in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur,' as performed by Sarah Bernhardt, exhibits a powerful scene of physical agony. The girl, under the excruciating torture of the poison she has inhaled, dies in convulsions, writhing between her two lovers, moaning over her

loss of life, so young, so happy. The spectators watch the throes of death as if they were present at a terrible operation. It is very fine.

Many years ago I witnessed the performance of Rachel in the same play. I remember the gaze of wonder with which she recognized the first symptoms of the poison, then her light struggles against the pain that she would not acknowledge. And when the conviction came that she was dying, her whole soul went out to her young lover — her eyes never left his, her arms clung to *him*, not to life, or only to life because life meant him. There was no vulgar display of physical suffering excepting in her repression of it. And she died with her eyes in his, as though she sent her soul into him.

I have known her pause hysterically in a scene when she heard the barking of a little dog confined in one of the dressing-rooms. If she had herself completely in control, as M. Coquelin describes, so small a matter need not have discomposed her.

Those who have traveled in Italy have seen artists making copies of the celebrated pictures in the galleries at Florence and Rome.

I saw before the Beatrice Cenci, in the Barberini Palace, one of the most perfect duplicates imaginable, the minutest examination could not detect a touch in the original that was not reproduced. What was wanting? There was something. Out of the original there came that tender, reproachful, beseeching look that haunted the spectator. It was not in the copy. It marked the difference between talent and genius. There is in all great works an almost imperceptible something so fine that it evades description, sensible rather than palpable, and of that faint, heavenly light the aureole is made.

Surely this exquisite touch of the soul cannot be the effect of cerebro-mechanism such as M. Coquelin describes. May not such a process, applied to great minds, tend to crib, cabin, and confine their effulgence? Is it not just possible that with a little less of this mechanical practice in the *Comédie-Française* and a little less of admiration for Zola, Sarah would have been a head and shoulders (including her heart) higher than she is?

The dependence of the artist on mechanism, so eloquently and truthfully laid down by M. Coquelin, may be accepted as appli-

cable to comedy and to such parts of tragic plays as may contain an infusion of comedy; but — with great respect to him — no further.

The independence of the artist from mechanism, claimed *per contra* by Mr. Irving, is admirable so far as pure tragedy is concerned, and only in scenes where such effusion is indicated by the eruptive language of the poet, which, if given with mechanical deliberation, might appear beneath the level of the volcanic passion.

DION BOUCICAULT

IV

A REPLY TO MR. HENRY IRVING

I

In the English review *The Nineteenth Century* Mr. Henry Irving has published a reply to the study on 'Acting and Actors' which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* last May. The opinion of so distinguished an artist as Mr. Irving could not be a matter of indifference to me; I have therefore read his article with the greatest attention, and I beg leave, as we do not agree, to reply to his reply.

I cannot believe that Mr. Irving was offended by my estimation of his talent. In attempting to define his talent I am not aware that I depreciated it. And this is all the answer I shall make to Mr. Irving's reproach that I have sat in judgment upon my colleagues and contemporaries. I neither judged nor condemned any one. My pur-

pose was to explain various theories. I cited examples, and I made those examples contemporary, because thus their verification was easy. It is only natural that my theory should seem to me to be the best, and in that respect Mr. Irving is not constituted otherwise than I am; but I do not think that I have allowed myself to be carried away so far as to deny the talent of those who profess a different faith from my own. It is likewise, I hasten to say, the doctrine and not the man which Mr. Irving attacks. And he attacks stoutly, and in a tone which at times reaches indignation, as if I had been wanting in respect to that holy of holies which he calls the "poetic drama"; but this vivacity needs no justification; on the contrary, it is most creditable to Mr. Irving, because it shows to what a degree he is passionately devoted to his art.

As for the question whether Mr. Irving really answers my thesis, that is another matter. Did I express myself badly? It is to be feared I did, for in more than one case Mr. Irving seems to have represented me as saying either what I did not say or the contrary of what I said. The only points on which he consents not to combat me are the

“truisms,” of which, he observes, my essay “contains a comforting proportion.” He ought then to admit as a truism what I said on the difference between the English and French ideas of “natural acting.” Here I do not pretend to have made any discovery; many more competent writers have advanced these views before me, and Mr. Irving’s article, and his talent too, are a new confirmation of their truth.

Yes, the English are above everything “original,” and they carry their taste for originality so far as to love even eccentricity. We in France are generalizers; the English, on the other hand, concern themselves chiefly with the individual; I will even say with exceptional individuals. Let us consider their most powerful types. Macbeth is not the universal ambitious man: he is Macbeth, the somnambulist of ambition, a fatal, strange, unique figure. Othello is not the type of the jealous man, the same at Venice or at Cyprus as in all other latitudes: he is a particular jealous man — jealous as a man can be who partakes of the nature of a hero and of a child, and who, like this noble Moor, combines the candor of a primitive soul with the

sudden and formidable impetuosity of African blood. And so with the others. The characters of Shakspeare are individuals, profoundly human, without doubt, but nevertheless exceptional. And perhaps that is excellent in drama, for as drama sets man struggling with destiny, the more powerfully organized are the beings whom it depicts smitten down by fate, the more soul-stirring and striking is the lesson.

Comedy, on the contrary, knows no other fatality than the logic of the characters; it depicts the usual course of things — common life, and men as they really are; it lives on generalities. And it is in this point that Molière triumphs. While the great English comic writer Ben Jonson delights to paint odd people — individuals and not types, *humors* and not characters — Molière puts on the stage general personages, who are universally true, and who live our own daily life; it is our humanity, ourselves as we are. There is nothing excessive in them, and nothing eccentric. The same is the case with our tragic personages. The characters of Racine, and even the characters of Corneille, in spite of the poet's austere personal accent, are more

general than those of Shakespeare. There are none of those spurts of individuality which give such exorbitant relief to the grand figures of the English poet. As in antique art, our characters keep in the ranks; they remain in the tone of the whole, which is harmony and measure. Drama, I repeat, perhaps demands more. But this is a fact, and a fact which, to my mind, reveals the difference in the genius of the two races. Let Mr. Irving play Nero in Racine's tragedy of 'Britannicus': I am sure he will feel how impossible it is to give to this terrible jealous emperor the transports of an Othello. Even in their fury our heroes do not know wild excess.

It is natural that this difference in the manner of conception should recur in the manner of rendering a character. English comedians, as it seems to me, are like English writers: their chief care is originality. Mr. Irving will not contradict me, for his whole article is, after all, nothing more than a claim in favor of this precious quality. He fears that my theories may smother originality by casting representation of character "in one unchanging mould," and so he pleads vigorously for

personal inspiration against tradition. This in reality is the true reason of our disagreement. Mr. Irving represent genius as independent and solitary, deriving everything from itself, or receiving from above certain sudden enlightenment, thanks to a special quality which he calls "electric," and which "distinguishes superior artists," or, in other words, idealists. I represent, or endeavor to represent, prosaically perhaps, but passionately also, that *ensemble* of traditions which constitutes the Comédie Française, that mass of accumulated observations, that inheritance of those who have gone before, by which the new-comers profit — the results of two centuries of study placed at the service of those who are beginning. Mr. Irving maintains that respect for this glorious past leads to imitation, is an obstacle to free personal inspiration, and, in a word, kills all individuality. This may be true for actors of second or third rank (though at any rate the system has the result of rendering them endurable, which is something); but for actors of talent, no. Great actors have not been wanting at the Comédie Française: have there been two alike? Did Talma resemble Lekain? Did

Samson stifle the genius of Rachel? Genius always makes its way. Far from obstructing true originality study develops it and sets it off to advantage; it removes that rust of oddness, of exaggeration, and of convention which so often clings to originality, and which would end by spoiling it; study polishes the blade and renders it more brilliant. Mr. Irving, speaking of Rachel — it is he who cites this example — says that she knew all of her art that could be taught, and that she elaborated her rôles with the utmost care; but that all this “experience and labor would have counted for little without the divine fire which made her so great.” If it counted for little, why should she have imposed upon herself this overwhelming labor? To say that the “divine fire” is everything is to say too much or too little. Without the “divine fire” a man cannot be an artist, but the “divine fire” is not equivalent to innate omniscience. It does not give an actor diction, nor does it teach him how to compose a rôle. And what is an artist without diction and composition? With the “divine fire” alone, and no study, an artist is necessarily incomplete, odd, capable here and there of fine bursts, but oftener

of false cries and mistaken movements. Work alone makes an accomplished artist.

In reality, this, I am convinced, is Mr. Irving's own opinion. He is probably also of my opinion on the question whether an actor ought actually to feel the emotions which he represents. He does not pronounce clearly, it is true; he even quotes an anecdote which seems to refute the theory of absolute self-possession. But the reason is that if he frankly adopted this theory, Mr. Irving would be afraid of seeming to condemn those sudden inspirations, those flashes of enlightenment, which he holds to be the mark of genius, and which happen spontaneously on the stage. He cites Kean, who was certainly not a "player who left anything to hazard," and who yet had "inspired moments." Kean was not the only one. Frédéric Lemaître also had "inspired moments." But let Mr. Irving read my essay over again, and he will see that I by no means deny inspiration. I said precisely that when one is sure of a rôle, when, like Kean, one leaves nothing to hazard, then indeed one can without inconvenience try some of those traits which are suggested by the heat of the repre-

sensation. What I protest against is the idea that one can be inspired in a rôle which one has not studied, and the belief that one is inspired when one is merely extravagant. The "electric quality" was possessed by Talma in the divinest degree, but it was always by the simplest means that he made this quality produce the most powerful effects. When he exclaimed as Oreste (Racine's 'Andromaque'), "Dieux! quels ruisseaux de sang coulent autour de moi!" (Heavens! what streams of blood flow around me!) he did not begin to stride about the stage toward the four cardinal points; he brought his legs together tightly, one against the other, his elbows clung closely to his body, his ribs shrank in, his shoulders rose in a movement of inexpressible horror, and almost without moving he became terrible. There is nothing supernatural in our art, and inspiration, far from being infallible, may often be mistaken. Frédéric had admirable inspirations, but he also had inspirations sometimes so wild that he had to ask pardon of the public.

On the other hand, a second-rate actor, carried along by his part or excited by some

particular circumstance, may have one of those movements of inspiration which produce the illusion of genius; in vain afterward he will try to recall the flame; he will remain Gros Jean just as he was before. It is not therefore very reasonable, in my opinion, to represent inspiration as the essential mark which distinguishes superior artists. The question, for that matter, is of small importance to the public. By what token shall the spectator know whether such and such a thrilling cry has just been hit upon by the actor there on the spot, or whether it has been tried, thought over, learnt, and repeated a hundred times beforehand?

Does Mr. Irving mean to maintain that the cry found on the stage by inspiration will be for that very reason infallibly truer and finer than the other? The whole history of dramatic art would rise in protestation against such an assertion. But behold! because I deny the divinity of inspiration I am once more arraigned and convicted of materialism. Yes: Mr. Irving has discovered that I am a materialist in art, and his chief ground for this conclusion is the importance, as he thinks, excessive, which I attribute to physical exte-

rior. He represents me as maintaining that every tragic impersonation imperatively demands a new body and a new voice, absolutely different from the voice and body which the artist has previously employed. Alas! I said on the contrary that this was the unattainable ideal, and I dwelt at length on the obstacles which the physical construction of an actor opposes to his playing certain parts which otherwise his intelligence would render him capable of undertaking. What I said, and what I repeat once more, is that an actor must modify his gait, his general bearing, and if he can, his voice, according to the character of the rôle. I cannot admit that Charles I. be made to walk and to talk like Mathias in the 'Bells,' like Hamlet, and like Iago. Mr. Irving, I observe, is somewhat negligent in this matter; but still he sometimes conforms: he changes his voice for Louis XI., for instance: this being so, I fail to comprehend why he plays Mephistopheles with the voice of Romeo. Do those differences prevent being as poetic and sublime as is desirable? In no way. For the matter of that, they are obtained by profoundly studying the rôle, which I recommend the actor to do before

everything else; for, far from having forgotten the soul of the rôle for the exterior, I said, and I repeat, that the actor must first become penetrated with the essence of his personage, that he must in a way swallow and digest it, and when once he has assimilated it, the exterior will follow of itself quite naturally. *It is the mind which constructs the body*, I said. I do not see that this axiom is so materialistic. Mr. Irving cites Kean, "who sometimes passed from one character to another with little more external variation than was suggested by a corked mustache," but whose impersonations were nevertheless most real and vivid. This does not astonish me at all; I consider it to be the perfection of art. I will, however, answer two things: the first is that on the stage, Kean, in order to pass from Romeo to Richard III., did not limit himself to so summary an exterior modification; and the second is that even in drawing-rooms he did not remain the same man in the two rôles. I guarantee that his voice changed, that, ardent and passionate in Romeo, it became sarcastic and crafty to express Richard; that in the same way his breast, instead of being broad, manly, and throbbing,

shrank up; that his shoulder grew humpy; that his attitude became cringing; and that when he drew himself up it was with the movements of a serpent. And this I imagine did not impair the poetry of Shakspeare.

“But,” says Mr. Irving, “you affirm that a hideous soul should have a hideous body, and that Mephistopheles should therefore be represented as an image of deformity; a conception,” he adds, “scarcely in harmony with the enlightenment of our age, and as primitive as the orthodoxy which used to insist that the devil wore horns and a tail.” And Mr. Irving takes the trouble to remind me of a number of historical personages whose portraits fill the old picture-galleries, and who were consummate scoundrels while being at the same time very handsome men. This is the brilliant passage of his article. But what is the drift of it all? What have we to do here with “the enlightenment of our age?” Was Mephistopheles a personage of our times? Is it my fault if the Middle Ages, which created the character, made him deformed, obeying therein an old human tendency of which there still remains something, whatever Mr. Irving may say to the con-

trary? Is it my fault if Goethe conformed with the legend? For in plain words Mephisto's cloven foot is mentioned twenty times in 'Faust,' and his walk must evidently be affected by this peculiarity. Does not Marguerite conceive a horror of him on account of his ugliness? I did not find it contrary to the spirit of the rôle when I saw Levinsky represent Mephistopheles with a slight hump on his back; not because, as Mr. Irving thinks, a hump is to my mind "a symbol of cynicism," but because, according to popular prejudices, it always implies wit and often malice, two characteristics which cannot be denied to Mephisto, and to which Levinsky gives extraordinary relief. In other respects, the attention of this remarkable artist has been especially directed to the negative side of the rôle. Mephisto is the one who says "No." His rôle is to disgust Faust with action by showing him its nothingness. Irony and sarcasm are his arms, and Levinsky manages these arms superlatively. The more vivid the expression given to the universal influence of the evil innate in Mephisto, and the more formidable and terrible he is rendered — and in this Mr. Irving succeeds

marvellously — the better; but I think it is a mistake to make him handsome, inasmuch as both the author and the legend represent him otherwise.

I will not insist upon another error made by Mr. Irving in his adaptation of Goethe's masterpiece. This error is not absolutely imputable to the actor; it is imposed upon the actor by the theatrical manager. The error I allude to is the almost complete annihilation of the rôle of Faust. If it is difficult, as the saying is, to conceive 'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark, it seems no less difficult to play 'Faust' without Faust. But this is almost what Mr. Irving is doing. And the explanation is obvious. The manager having at hand for Mephistopheles an exceptional actor, and having no such actor for Faust, solved the difficulty by sacrificing the latter rôle. The result is that the piece does what Mephisto does not: it limps. Mr. Irving does not seem to have noticed this fact, and the authority of his general observations on the work is detracted from all the more as manager and actor are in this case one and the same person, namely, Mr. Irving himself.

The special point of view of the manager

is revealed in Mr. Irving's article in other remarks, also at the expense, I think, of the point of view of the actor. For instance, after having accused me of materialism on account of the attention I pay to the exterior of the actor, he takes up against me the defence of those "picturesque aids" which, he says, heighten the effect of the action and contribute to its beauty. But is it not precisely these picturesque aids which contribute to complete that physical exterior about which, in his opinion, I take too much trouble? It seems to me — with all due respect be it said — that Mr. Irving is here contradicting himself for the mere pleasure of contradicting me.

Evidently, whether he employ picturesque aids, or whether he confine himself to the resources of his admirable talent, Mr. Irving seeks in the highest degree to mark all his rôles with his personal stamp and seal. He means to remain Mr. Irving in all his creations, and he cannot understand why I advise him in certain rôles to efface as much as possible his own personality in order to bring forward conspicuously the personality of the character he is playing. "What!" he says;

“ here is Edwin Booth, who plays Hamlet. He looks and speaks the melancholy, the passion, the poetry, and the satire of this supreme creation; yet is he to be told that if in some detail of aspect, gesture, or movement he remind the audience that he still be Edwin Booth, he is making the character a part of himself, instead of losing his own nature for the time in the world of imagination? ”

By no means. We should have to say that only if he disfigured the rôle in order to get possession of it, and if he substituted his own personality for that of his personage. The mind of the spectator undergoes a kind of reduplication similar to that of the actor. Just as the actor is at once his personage and the person who plays it, so the man who listens to him is at once the spectator, I might almost say the dupe, who allows himself to be transported into the passions of this personage, who feels them, shudders at them, or weeps at them, and at the same time he is the critic who knows that he has before his eyes an artist, and who, as the case may be, applauds or hisses that artist. And a still more curious thing is that the more the spectator sees the personage, and the more complete

the illusion, the more the critic applauds the actor. Edwin Booth is never so loudly applauded as when he is exclusively Hamlet; and for that matter I am told that this is always the case. If he reminded the spectator too frequently that he is Booth and not the Prince of Denmark, the illusion would be broken, and pleasure would consequently become impossible for the listener-spectator, who would soon communicate his coldness to the listener-critic, and the actor would suffer for his fault.

Mr. Irving ends his article with the Parthian arrow that *realistic portraiture*, so important in the comic drama, occupies a comparatively minor place in tragedy. The consequence, which he does not object to indicate, is that those who are most skilful in this realistic portraiture — which, by the way, is nothing less than the exact and living representation of characters — may be perfectly incapable of rising to the heights of poetic drama. And such, alas! would be my case.

This sentence must have been passed in a moment of that divine inspiration which Mr. Irving makes out to be the privilege of superior artists, for he dispenses with men-

tioning human reasons in support of his verdict. It becomes me, therefore, to bow my head. I might mention artists, and not the least eminent, who are excellent in both kinds; I might ask if this inaccessible poetic drama, written by men, after all, and which puts men on the stage, really requires something more than men to play it. But this is simple trifling. Tragedy or comedy, which is the superior form? The question is as old as art itself, always disputed and never solved. For my part I am satisfied with what Molière says in the 'Critique de l'École des Femmes.' And now to conclude, turning against Mr. Irving himself his accusation of prosaism, I will reproach him with attaching too much importance to those picturesque aids which he thinks are poetry, and which are simply conventionality; I ask him if he does not fear lest by dint of seeking beauty in the rare, the unexpected, and the extraordinary, he may forget to take it where it really is, in nature. I'm afraid, I confess, that Mr. Irving sacrifices a good deal to scenery; that in making the personages too grand he will finally cause them to lose that humanity which is the true principle of their

sublimity; and I do not regret that I have preached above everything the study of truth, of that truth which reveals to us the human heart, of that truth which is, after all, the eternal basis of art, inasmuch as beauty is nothing but the splendor of it.

CONSTANT COQUELIN

V

A REPLY TO MR. DION BOUCICAULT

I did not read the article by Mr. Dion Boucicault in the *North American Review* of August until after having written the above reply to Mr. Irving. It happens, however, that in answering Mr. Irving I have also answered Mr. Boucicault, at least on many points. But the article is substantial, interesting, and clear; it is most kind toward me; I am therefore bound in politeness to add a few lines addressed directly to its eminent author.

In order to give the casting vote in the question, Mr. Dion Boucicault takes his stand at his special point of view as a dramatic author who excels in both departments. He describes his method of comic composition as entirely a matter of calculation and deliberation, and compares it with his method of tragic composition, which is entirely a matter

of impulse and of passion. Supposing that something analogous to this difference must also exist between the process of the comic actor and the process of the tragedian, he therefore concludes that Mr. Irving is right as regards tragedy; but so far as concerns comedy, and even characteristic drama, I am not perhaps in the wrong; and thus he non-suits us both in the most charming manner possible.

What Mr. Dion Boucicault says about his two ways of working, according as he puts on Shakspeare's cap or Molière's, is very interesting, and gave me great pleasure; but it seems to me that the conclusions he draws are too hasty. The differences between the author and the actor are greater than he imagines. All is over for the author the moment he leaves his desk; for the actor, on the contrary, one may say that it is then that all begins. The work that he brings to the theater is a mere sketch, which becomes definitive only by means of the rehearsal; the actor is only a part of a whole, he cannot work alone; finally, he has to face the public, which places him, with regard to the author, on the same footing as the soldier marching in person to

the assault of batteries stands with regard to the strategist who from his chamber directs the operation by telegraph. This fact justifies many differences of method.

Every writer who composes has his hours of inspiration, or of poetic "eruption," to use Mr. Boucicault's word, when he seems to write under the dictation of some spirit. Since Mr. Boucicault says that it is so, I must believe that these moments are peculiar to the tragic author, although I do not clearly see the reason, and although what is called the *vis comica* seems to me, on the contrary, to be altogether of a nature to procure for those who cultivate it a sort of intoxication and frenzy of which it would not be difficult to find traces in Aristophanes, Molière, Regnard, and their successors. But when the tragic author has fallen again to the earth, and seeks to find his whereabouts, what does he do? He criticises his inspiration. He revises, he judges, cuts out here, amplifies there; and his work is not finished until after this second operation. Now is not this second operation even more necessary to the actor? and how can he go through this operation if he abandons himself to inspiration in pres-

ence of the public itself? This is why I recommend him to be absolutely master of himself on the night of the first performance, and Mr. Dion Boucicault implicitly agrees with me when he says that these "passional spasms" are only to be safely attempted by perfectly trained artists, and that "when novices give way to their effusion they inevitably become grotesque." I have not made any assertion stronger than that.

To sum up: Inspiration is imagination; that the actor does not shut his door against it, all well and good; but the *folle du logis*, the madcap imagination, must not become the mistress of the house.

I find Mr. Dion Boucicault somewhat severe toward tragedy. He denies it the quality of variety. Why? That tragedy is concerned with beauty more than comedy seems to me incontestable; and beauty, is it not sublimated truth? And are not the manifestations of truth innumerable? The characters of tragedy can therefore be as varied as those of comedy. I cannot admit that all heroes are alike. In the tragic authors, just as much as in Homer, they are dissimilar. Ædipus is not Lear; Orestes is not Hamlet.

Their tears are *chemically* the same; *humanly* there is nothing more unlike. I can scarcely understand any better why the painting of passions should be held to lower tragedy, and why in consequence, as Salvini thinks, Shakspeare should be ranked below Sophocles, who, according to the great Italian tragedian, confined himself, we must suppose, to dramatizing the great strokes of destiny (as if the domestic affections did not play the leading part in that adorable 'Antigone,' the most winning conception of Greek genius). No; man cannot abstract himself from his creation; there is no masterpiece in which he is not. Man is the end and aim of tragedy, as of comedy; and the tragedian, like the comedian, having to render man, I do not see why their methods should differ so radically.

The tragedian must be master of himself quite as much as the comedian. Perhaps this is more difficult for the tragedian; that is all. Mr. Dion Boucicault relates the anecdote of Rachel being disconcerted on the stage by the barking of a little dog confined in one of the dressing-rooms. Will he allow me to tell him that this proves nothing either against Rachel or against me? Admirably mistress

of her rôle, sure of saying only what she had previously tried and proved, holding herself, in a word, thoroughly in control *so far as the actress was concerned*, Rachel, *so far as the woman was concerned*, might very well not have the same power over her nerves, and not be able to command so despotically impressions received from *outside*. I think that I myself am fairly cool and self-possessed on the stage, but I would not guarantee myself to be proof against similar accidents. The case here is very different. I claim that the actor should see and hear himself play, but no *exterior* circumstances must prevent him doing so. I should have protested vehemently if a broad aisle had been cut down the middle of the orchestra stalls at the Comédie Française, as there was talk of doing not long ago. Why? Because I know how terribly the actor on the stage in the middle of a *tirade* would be irritated by one single gentleman walking carelessly down this passage, and distributing discreet nods and greetings right and left. Certainly it is better not to be susceptible; but when you are absorbed completely in a certain task, and when you are just realizing that difficult problem of being

two persons in one, it is most annoying to feel obliged to reckon with accidents in the auditorium, however puerile they may be; and as for a little dog barking in a dressing-room, it is enough to exasperate all the actors on the stage, and all the spectators in the house as well.

But, I repeat, this is a different thing; and when a tragedian, undisturbed by any exterior accident, loses control of himself on the boards, if he is badly inspired, he must not imitate his heroes and say, "It is destiny," but rather he must say, "I do not know my part," and set to work to study again.

Certainly no mechanical practice can give genius. I never made any such monstrous assertion. A man is born with greater or less natural gifts, and the reason why remains a mystery. But he must cultivate his gifts and he must work out his genius. Mr. Boucicault speaks of that indescribable something which makes an original picture superior to the most perfect copy imaginable. Well, I know in what that indescribable something consists. It consists, on the one hand, in the author's manner of feeling, which, in its turn, depends upon his personality, that is to say, on some-

thing of unknown, and if you like of divine, origin; and on the other hand, it consists in his manner of rendering what he feels, that is to say, his artistic process. Now while he has little or no power over his personality, the artist has every power over his process; and so it came about that Raphael thrice changed his manner.

One thing which quite astounds and puzzles me is that I am accused of preaching Zolisme, or Zolaism, whichever may be the preferable orthography. I must, indeed, have expressed myself very obscurely. However, when my article appears in book form with full development, it will be seen clearly that I am a partisan of *naturalness* as opposed to *naturalism*. I shall never admit that ugliness can be in art a principle equal to beauty, and that it can claim the right to be worshipped. Ugliness is an accident, a source of contrast, and the moment it no longer serves to bring beauty into relief, it is superfluous. This doctrine is also, I am sure, that of Sarah Bernhardt. Mr. Dion Boucicault doubts it. He compares her manner of playing the fifth act of 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' with Rachel's performance in the same

play, which he once witnessed, and he gives us to understand that while Sarah is superior in physical realism, her predecessor was superior poetically. But, after all, is it so sure that the classic Rachel did not have flashes of romantic or naturalist boldness? Here is a little-known anecdote related by M. James Darmesteter in his excellent edition of 'Macbeth.' Rachel was once on the point of playing Lady Macbeth in England. The memory of Mrs. Siddons haunted her, and as she was told that the English actress had exhausted every resource, especially in the sleep-walking scene — "Oh, but I have an idea of my own," replied Rachel. "I should lick my hand."

If I am not mistaken, this extraordinary inspiration approaches very near to Zolaism. *Que voulez-vous?* Art is great, and genius can pass strange things into the sanctuary. Rachel might have been sublime when she licked her hand; Sarah may be sublime in the realistic agony of Adrienne. In any case, I am sure that over her most terrible convulsions the angel of grace still hovers. For Sarah is a woman of high intelligence, very sensitive withal, and instinctively, like the

criticism of our day, open to the charm of the poetry of all epochs; she adores all that is exquisite, being herself exquisite. But she admires and appreciates simple grandeur, and the brutalities of an abrupt genius may be not displeasing to her. Thus she may admit in Zola undeniable power; but if at certain lofty elevations she happens to be of the same mind with Zola, I will guarantee she is not the woman to descend with him to 'La Terre.'

The reproach of monstrosity brought against Sarah also seems to me to be exaggerated. The misfortune is that authors will write rôles expressly for her; they cut them to the pattern of her nature, so that in consequence she has only to be herself in order to be excellent.

At the Comédie-Française this would not have been the case. The ancient and the modern repertory would have forced her to diversify herself more. But she did not stay there long enough. How can Mr. Dion Boucicault accuse this "college of the histrionic art" of having inoculated her with that "mechanical practice," so dangerous, he says, for the independence of the artist? There

is no "mechanical practice" taught at the Comédie-Française. Tradition reigns at the Comédie, but it does not govern; and those who wish may emancipate themselves from that tradition. At the present day do we not see there at the same time Worms, who is the personification of correctness, and Mounet-Sully, the incarnation of all that is unexpected and impulsive? Let us then say no more about uniformity of teaching.

To conclude, I am not throughout in agreement with Mr. Dion Boucicault, but, as he will see, we are of the same mind on more points than he imagined. I feel very much flattered by the attention which has been paid to my little essay by the eminent dramatist, and it is a great satisfaction for me to have been appreciated in so impartial, and on the whole so favorable, a manner by a theatrical man so completely equipped as Mr. Dion Boucicault.

CONSTANT COQUELIN

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